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## WAR DELUSIONS.

The war-system rests on delusion, and the whole history of war is a tissue of the grossest delusions that ever misled the human mind. Men must unlearn these immemorial, world-wide errors; and our first step in the peace reform brings us into conflict with them, and compels us to attempt their exposure and refutation.

1. Mark, then, *the sure and sometimes rapid growth of wickedness in war.* “Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing?” Yet Hazael did it ere long with few or no twinges of conscience. Even Jenghiz-khan, the great Moloch of war in the thirteenth century, would doubtless have shrunk, when he began his work of blood, from the thought of sacrificing, before the close of his career, thirty-two millions of his fellow men. When the French Revolutionists, sword in hand, rushed forth with their cry of *war to the palace but peace to the cottage*, they little dreamed that their crusade for liberty and equality would end in butchering peasants, as well as princes, by wholesale, and in deluging Europe with the blood of eight or ten millions of her children. So of our war with Mexico. It was to be a few skirmishes for a few weeks; but it continued two years, with nearly thirty battles. It was at first said, we drew the sword merely to drive back those who had “shed American blood upon American soil;” but anon, our troops rushed fiercely across the Rio Grande, nor paused in their work of bloodshed, plunder and devastation, until they reached the Halls of the Montezumas, and we heard from some of our own people a wild outcry for the conquest of all Mexico, for the annexation of her entire territory to our own, and even the blotting of her name from the record of nations! True, public opinion had not become corrupt enough to let this be done; but the progress of rapacity and vengeance in the war so loudly demanded it for a time, that those who objected to such a scheme of gigantic villainy, were for a time scouted as behind the age, troubled with weak scruples unworthy of Anglo-Saxons!! Had any thing like this been seriously proposed at the outset, or barely suggested as possible, every honest man in the land would have cried out against it as monstrons, incredible wickedness, fit only for Vandals or savages.

2. Mark, then, *the self-deception into which war deludes men.* The case of Napoleon is well known. The Corsican blood-leech, the remorseless vam-pyre of a continent, the invader and ravager of almost every country in the Old World, still fancied himself a fighter only by compulsion, and consoled his dying moments with the reflection gravely made, and as gravely recorded, that *he had never waged an aggressive war, but had always drawn his sword merely in self-defence!* Thus do every people represent their own wars; nor can you point to a single one during the last century, that was not regarded on both sides as strictly defensive. No decent man now pretends to justify any other wars; and the apologists for our late crusade against Mexico, a war as clearly offensive as any one you can find on the pages of

history, a war far less justifiable on our part than that of our revolution was on the part of Great Britain, have nevertheless spoken of it as a holy war, a war of strict self-defence, for the protection of our hearths, our wives and children, against Mexican invaders that never came, nor were ever expected to come, within a hundred miles of any American habitation.\* It would seem as if we traversed more than a hundred miles of desert to reach her inhabited territory, and then plunged into her chapporals, and scaled her mountains, and wandered over her valleys from city to city, in search of foes to fight, some three thousand miles off, all in defence of our own soil, our altars and firesides! It would be difficult to conceive a more glaring case of self-stultification; and a man who can really believe all this, we may well suppose to be ripe for any imaginable falsehood and folly.

3. Akin to this delusion, is the idea of *war as a judicial process*, a means of justice between nations. What do we find in a judicial process? A law common to both parties; a judge to interpret and apply that law; a jury to hear and determine the facts in the case; the accuser confronting the accused in open court; witnesses carefully examined under oath; the whole case argued on both sides before the judge and jury; the verdict rendered in scrupulous accordance with the law and the facts; the right of a new hearing, or the privilege of appeal to a higher tribunal; the hope, in criminal cases, of reprieve or pardon; due delay for the correction of possible errors; the penalty proportioned to the offence, and inflicted only on the guilty.

Such is a process of justice; but is there anything like this in war? Not the least. No common law; no judge or jury; no form or pretence of trial; no charges duly preferred; no testimony publicly given under oath; no opportunity to argue the case fully and fairly; no formal verdict or sentence; no chance for any correction of errors; no privilege of appeal, or right to a new hearing; no hope of pardon or reprieve; no trustworthy officer to execute the precise sentence of the law; no restriction of the penalty to the exact demerits of the criminal; no precautions to guard the innocent against suffering what is due to the guilty alone. Each party in war makes a law for itself, erects its own tribunal of blood, and then acts as accuser and witness, as judge and executioner, in its own behalf. What an outrage on common sense to call this a judicial process, a method of justice between nations! Justice by the process of twenty, fifty or a hundred thousand professional murderers, meeting on a field of battle to shoot, and stab, and trample each other down!

Yet such is the general vague idea of war as a method of determining justice between nations, and compelling them to do right. Here is the common logic of blood — our plea for the war against Mexico; England's pretext for her wars in the East; the apology of France for hers in Africa; the heartless,

\* "This is no war of defence, but one unnecessary, and of offensive aggression. It is Mexico that is defending her firesides, her castles, and her altars; not we." — Mr. Clay's Lexington Speech, Nov. 1847

cold-blooded pretence for all wars. Strange, that men of sense should ever be duped by a delusion so glaring! War a method of justice! No more than a duel, a street brawl among a set of drunken rowdies, or a rencontre between two tigers, or a hundred buffaloes. War is a process not of justice, but revenge; the way only for brutes or fiends to right their wrongs.

Just glance at the *character of the agents* commonly employed in this process of international justice. Who and what are they? Do they resemble in character the men selected to administer justice between individuals? Napoleon used to say, the worse the man, the better the soldier; Wellington insisted, before parliament and the world, that no man with nice scruples about religion, such as any real Christian *must* have, is fit for military service; and it is well known, that England has been wont to release criminals from the prison and the gallows on condition of their enlisting in her army or navy. What sort of men went forth to the war against Mexico?\* Doubtless some worthy citizens; occasionally a member of some Christian church, though generally an apostate from her principles, if not from her fellowship; here and there a solitary minister of the Gospel, though so solitary as to be viewed with wonder, shame and abhorrence, by the mass of Christians through the land. At the West and South-west, where the war-mania pervaded at first all classes, the volunteers, if we may trust the judgment of careful observers on the spot, were about one-fourth from the first families, another quarter mechanics or farmers, and the remaining half loafers and rowdies, whose departure for the war left a sudden vacancy in the lowest haunts of profligacy. At the East and North, the recruits were mainly the dregs of society, scooped out of its sewers and gutters; graduates from prisons and poor-houses; frequenters of grog-shops and brothels; men bankrupt either in fortune or character, sometimes in both; with here and there an honest, misguided farmer or mechanic, a reckless, desperate aspirant after political office, or some sprig of republican aristocracy too proud or too lazy to work for a livelihood, but ambitious to strut in regiments at the head of a company or platoon. Such are the agents of war-justice between nations; such the stuff that heroes are commonly made of.

*(To be continued.)*

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THE SOLDIER'S DUTIES!—Let us learn the soldier's duties (!) from Suwarrow's *Catechism*, a series of directions by that great general to his soldiers. “Push hard with the bayonet. The ball will lose its way; the bayonet never. The ball is a fool; the bayonet a hero. Stab once; and off with the Turk from the bayonet! Stab the second! Stab the third! A hero will stab half a dozen! If three attack you, stab the first, fire on the second, and bayonet the third! !”

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\*In one of our extreme south-western States, (Arkansas,) it was gravely proposed in the Legislature to pardon out the inmates of their penitentiary, if they would volunteer for the war against Mexico; and in one of our northern cities, an entire company was enlisted from the almshouse. We might quote a superabundance of facts on this point; but the general character of our troops, though perhaps better than most soldiers, was too notorious to require proof.